SYNOPSIS

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Socio-Ethical Concerns in the Select Novels of J. M. Coetzee and Arvind Adiga: A Comparative Study

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Introduction

Moral consciousness is need of the hour to experience peace and harmony in contemporary society. Literature plays vital role in strengthening the morale of fellow beings who suffer moral dilemma. It is for this reason that through the literary traditions many writers were interested in the rational ground of morality. Their works have been taken as case studies and help in restoring beliefs, moral principles which are meant to regulate the life of the community. Ethics are based on the foundations of the moral behavior of man, and substantial portion of the moral codes are based on religious beliefs, social customs and traditions. When we talk of socio-ethical concerns, it implies the drastic, serious situation in society which, if unchecked, is about to ruin the entire value or belief system, customs and traditions of a society.

Literature as a reinforcing agent of moral values records and helps in retrieving human sensibilities underlying critical survival conditions; and thereby it boosts the ethical foundations of a society.

Socio-ethical concerns form core of literary endevour across the globe as it reveals conflict between internal and external forces. The internal forces, out of excessive greed, evil mindset and materialistic values, compete for supremacy over common people; and whereas outer dominant political forces i.e. colonial powers attempt to wipe out native belief system and install its own to rule over the region. This study undertakes to study the writings of John Maxwell Coetzee and Arvind Adiga who project a disordered state of society wherein entire belief system is under attack from internal or external dominant forces.

J. M. Coetzee, a white writer born and brought up in Cape Town, is acclaimed South African novelist and academician. Internationally, he has many literary prizes and awards including Twice Booker Prizes (1984 and 1999) and higher prestigious Nobel Prize for literature in 2003. Today he is probably the most complex and intellectually engaging writer from South Africa. Coetzee's literary works include novels, critical essays, memoirs and reviews. It presents an unrest in human society which is both insightful and searing. His novels sketch a dark world structured by inequality and dehumanization and has been an important voice in the debates around politics and representation in Apartheid South Africa. Coetzee emigrated Australia in 2002 where he lives today.

Similarly, Arvind Adiga, born in Madras is critically acclaimed Indian novelist and journalist. Adiga achieved wider international fame after winning the Man Booker Prize in 2008. He is the former India correspondent for *Time magazine*, written articles for *Financial Times*, *Independent* and the *Sunday Times;* and so far has written four novels, short stories and literary reviews. Adiga projects disillusioned state of democratic society. His novel explores lower middle class ethics, the vacuum created by mis-governance that allows greed and envy to flourish, the bureaucracy that creates the illusion of order and justice while perpetuating the opposite. Adiga has drawn most authentically sardonic picture of Indian society- the grime, lawlessness, casteism, corruption, moral disintegration, greed, fabulous wealth and abject misery, a world in which predators always triumph; where people of integrity and good will are almost always gobbled up.

This research proposes a comparative analysis and interpretation of novels of J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), *Age of Iron* (1990), *Disgrace* (1999) in South African literature and Arvind Adiga's *The White Tiger* (2008), *Between the Assassinations* (2009) and

Last Man in Tower (2016) in Indian literature. This would enable the prospective readers to acquaint themselves with the eternal ethical values that needed to be adopted and adapted to in order to maintain social order in changing times.

Waiting for Barbarians (1980) brought Coetzee international fame and name. It is complex allegorical response to the ethical and moral dimensions of South African social, political dilemma. The novel depicts relationship between barbarity and civilization. Set in unspecified land, a desert landscape at indeterminate point in time, its mains themes are Terror of Colonial paranoia, justice, violence, conflicts, torture, fear and knowledge, question of honour and unjust and cruel empire.

Age of Iron (1990) is set in apartheid era of South Africa. In this novel Coetzee gives a oblique and uncompromising concerns of his country in the voice of Elizabeth Curren. She is an aged white South African woman dying of cancer in Cape Town during the worst excesses of apartheid states emergency in 1980s. Mrs. Curren is narrator and protagonist of this novel. She is isolated and lonely white woman surrounded by a hostile colonial culture with which she is unable to empathize. Coetzee give grim account of both human beings facing imminent death and entire country – South Africa immerced in the tragedy of the apartheid regime. There are number of themes like: Violence, humanism, problems of white representations, isolation, brutality and lot of common people in general.

Disgrace (1999) brought a Booker prize for J M Coetzee. In this novels Coetzee grapples with the savage complexity of the apartheid and post-apartheid years. He takes the novel into new imaginative and moral territory. David Lurie, on whom Coetzee visits a contemporary catalogue of humiliations, is a fairly average, twice-married, lecturer at Capetown University who, accused of sexual misconduct with one of his students,

chooses not to defend himself but rather to suffer his fate with a noble, slightly grumpy, stoicism. In his mind, Lurie has committed no offence; he prefers to get fired and suffer disgrace than endure a politically correct process of rehabilitation. He will not give his bien pensant academic tormentors the satisfaction they crave. “Pass sentence,” he says, “and let us get on with our lives.” He retires to the country to live with his daughter Lucy, and address the meaning of this self-inflicted injunction. It’s here that *Disgrace*, moving up a gear, begins seriously to engage with the aftermath of apartheid.

Arvind Adiga’s novel *The White Tiger* is an allegorical exploration of dark side of India wherein social unequality, casteism, corruption and political, social institutions apathy toward public property are major serious issues. Adiga portrays an oblique picture of degenerating ethical norms in a democratic society. Under the guise of Balram Halwai, the protagonist of the novel, the novelist recounts apathy of socio-political institutions towards common people which ultimately may obliterate the sense of being in a free society. The novel is strong comment on general development process in India at the cost of loss of hope of common people in political institutions. The major themes of novel are relationship between master and slave, widening gap between poor and rich, corrupt social-political system.

Between the Assassinations is set in allegorical town named Kittur in the southern part of India and records feelings of unrest and chaos among general people between the assassinations of Indian Prime Ministers (1984 to 1991). It is collection of stories from various classes of people which becomes vehicle of voicing socio-ethical concerns in democratic society. It covers major themes of corruption, poverty, casteism, negligence of government toward public issues and declining faith in democratic institutions in independent India.

Last Man In Tower is set in Tower-A of the Vishram Co-operative Housing society in Vakola, Mumbai. It is an aging, run-down apartment building inhabited by a disappearing breed, the middle class. The occupants of Tower A are a closely knit bunch, having supported each other through many crises, trials and tragedies. Yet, when a builder approaches the society with a lucrative offer, friendships that have spanned decades start to fall apart. The novel takes for inspiration a phenomenon that has swept every Indian metro in recent years: middle class families wooed by sky-rocketing property prices sell their modest homes and move into penthouses, swapping their scooters for cars, Godrej *almaris* for imported teak cupboards, thrifty habits for a lifestyle of affluence. The protagonist of the novel is a retired sixty-one year old science teacher, 'Masterji', is the last man to resist the builder's offer. Masterji's resistance in the face of the rising bribes and threats of the builder find a parallel with the struggles of men and women, all over India, who resist the clearance of their homes to build dams, bridges and factories. Adiga points out that promising prosperity, often endanger something immaterial but important - a way of life and middle class integrity and decency. Adiga account the process of shift of attitudes in the new India of the skyscrapers that replace low-rise apartment buildings. The novels develops major themes like respect for proportionate income, civility, decency and personal attachment above monetary gain.

Comparative study of the above novels in terms of structure, style and the philosophical vision would lead to comprehensive and adequate understanding of the works and their authors. Mainly, this research seeks to study interactions between literatures written in various countries that merges and unify the world into a single whole. The implications and the underlying identities of both similarities and differences in both South

African and Indian literature would enable a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the artist. Thus main idea of comparing two societies is to broaden one's perspective by discovering certain dominant trends in a literature and culture and to understand precise relations between two literatures. This study, thus aims to enhance awareness of the qualities of one work by using the products of another linguistic culture as an illuminating context.

Necessity of Conducting Research:-

Writings of J. M. Coetzee and Arvind Adiga received attention of scholars, academicians for its depiction of stark reality of apartheid and post-colonial societies. However, nothing concrete has been attempted on the ethical dimensions of these writers. The present study seeks to examine the brilliance their art in putting forth the moral degradation of society which deserve to be looked upon more seriously. Thus, the proposed research explores in detail and tries to understand said writers' attitude towards projecting livelihood patterns that mostly rely on unethical means to survive in society.

Aims and Objectives:-

The present task has been undertaken keeping in view the specific objective in mind, as mentioned below:

- To present a historical overview of importance of ethics, morals and values in human societies.
- To infer the prominent ethics from social milieu in the novels of J. M. Coetzee and Arvind Adiga.
- To understand socio-ethical dilemma in respective societies.
- To understand and analyze aesthetic vision of both the writers for a just society.

- Compare and contrast the approach of J. M. Coetzee and Arvind Adiga with their contemporary South Africa and Indian writers.
- To study the contribution of J. M. Coetzee and Arvind Adiga in understanding universal human values.
- To examine the pessimistic implications of unethical behavior on society.
- To study the optimistic undercurrents in the select novels of J. M. Coetzee and Arvid Adiga.
- To examine democratic value system in contemporary society.
- An attempt will be made t study the said writers' contribution to the literary criticism.
- To redefine role of South African and Indian Literary Canon in fostering morale of readers.

Assumptions:-

Literature records human sensibilities under extreme survival conditions and helps in boosting the ethical foundations of a society. In this tryst J. M. Coetzee and Arvind Adiga depict self-contradictory picture of respective societies by developing stories around rural and urban background on themes like barbarity, violence, isolation and rich-poor divide, corrupt practices, casteism. They want to shake-up general sense of wellbeing based on superficial contentment among people in current situation. For them writing is an instrument to give vent to their internal conflicts, emotional turmoil, and psychological contradictions as well as a platform to project a chaotic situation on account of degradation of moral standards in society. Through the literary artifects both the writers condemns wrong done everywhere evident in the world and help in generating consensus against immoral practices. The primary aim of

their works is just not depiction of violence, barbarity and conflict but to project a disordered world demanding introspection, reexamination of social value system that strives for development at the cost of lives of common people.

Research Methodology:-

The present research is analytical, interpretative, critical, evaluative and comparative in nature. The primary sources would be put to close scrutiny and secondary sources shall be thoroughly examined to support the arguments. An attempt would be undertaken to trace the role of literature in respective societies in nurturing eternal ethical values in society.

Research Design:-

For the convenience of study, the research has been subdivided into following chapters:

Chapter – One: - Introduction

Chapter – Two: - Review of Literature

Chapter – Three: - Urban Socio-Ethical Concerns in the novels of J. M. Coetzee and Arvind Adiaga

Chapter – Four: - Rural Socio-Ethical Concerns in the novels of J. M. and Arvind Adiga

Chapter – Five: - Allegorical response to ethical dilemmas in respective societies

Allegorical response to human predicament in respective societies

Chapter – Six: - Comparative Analysis

Chapter – Seven: - Conclusion

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